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RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 6392
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 4608
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2444
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 4564
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3670
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 8822
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 6207
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO 0791
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3055
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001102

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: TMVP, GSL, AND UNICEF SIGN MOU ON CHILD SOLDIERS

REF: A. COLOMBO 869

[1](#)B. COLOMBO 975

[1](#)C. COLOMBO 894

[1](#)D. COLOMBO 1036

[1](#)E. COLOMBO 1099

Classified By: Charge d' Affaires James R. Moore Reasons: 1.4(b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On December 1 the Government, the TMVP and UNICEF signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that committed each party to end the use and recruitment of child soldiers by the TMVP. Karuna signed on behalf of the TMVP, "as leader of the TMVP in the presence of the Chief Minister of the Eastern Province." The MOU goes into effect December 1 and imposes a March 1 deadline for all actions to be completed. Coupled with the MOU, a public information campaign will launch in late January that will communicate the government's zero tolerance policy on child soldiers. Additionally, the President is set to enact a law that will provide protections for releasees to ensure they are treated as victims. The TMVP's participation and commitment is a positive step forward. Embassy will continue to remain engaged on the issue and press both GSL officials and Karuna and Pillaiyan themselves to ensure that their commitments are fulfilled. End Summary

TMVP, UNICEF and GSL Sign MOU

[1](#)2. (C) UNICEF Resident Representative Philippe Duamelle reported to Charge that on December 1 the Government of Sri Lanka, the Tamil Makkal Vidulthalai Pulikal (TMVP), and UNICEF signed a memorandum of understanding that committed each party to clearly defined actions to end the use and recruitment of child soldiers by the TMVP. For its part, the TMVP pledged to release all of its remaining child soldiers. (Note: Through October, UNICEF had 62 known cases of child soldiers in its database.) The paramilitary organization also pledged to stop all future recruitment of child soldiers, effective immediately. In addition, it agreed to provide UNICEF free access to TMVP offices and camps to conduct searches for child soldiers.

13. (SBU) The December 1 meeting took place at the Ministry of Defense and was attended by Defense Secretary Gothabaya Rajapaksa, Justice Secretary and the GSL's point person on child soldiers Suhada Gamalath, Eastern Province Chief Minister Sivanesanathurai Chadraakanthan ("Pillaiyan"), and Member of Parliament and TMVP Commander Vinayagamurthi Muralitharan ("Karuna Amman").

Full Compliance Deadline March 1

14. (SBU) The memorandum of understanding will now go to the UN Security Council, after which a series of recommended actions will be made to each of the three parties. The parties, in turn, will have 30 days to produce an action plan. However, Duamelle pointed out that despite these formal procedures which are mandated by the UN, the memorandum of understanding signed by the three parties goes into effect as of December 1, with actions to be completed by March 1, 2009.

Public Awareness Campaign Launches in January

15. (C) Duamelle also reported that a public awareness campaign that has been under development by the GSL, UNICEF, and a communications firm for several months will be launched in the second half of January 2009. It will stress the government's zero tolerance for the recruitment and use of child soldiers. In the Eastern and Northern Provinces and in

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Colombo, television and radio spots, billboards, and posters in schools will convey the government's policy of zero tolerance for the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

Legal Protection for Released Children

16. (C) In addition, Duamelle told Charge that agreement has been reached on the text of a "gazetted" document that President Rajapaksa will sign that provides regulations as to how surrenderees under the age of 18 who give up their weapons will be handled. This will increase the legal protection that is afforded to child soldiers who are released and prevent them from being treated as criminals.

17. (C) COMMENT: This tripartite agreement, which follows a July 2008 agreement signed between the GSL and UNICEF, is a welcome development. The Embassy and visiting USG officials have pressed the government at every opportunity on the need for the TMVP, its political ally in the East, to release the child soldiers it is holding. (ref B) In addition, the DCM (ref A) and the Ambassador (ref C) have met with the Chief Minister to press him to show results. Post will continue to engage on the issue to urge that the TMVP follows through on this important commitment.

18. (C) The MOU signing comes amid a deepening rift between the TMVP leaders. Karuna is widely suspected of being behind the murder of Pillaiyan's key advisor Ragu (ref D), and recent violence in the East (ref E) has heightened those tensions. It is encouraging that both Karuna and Pillaiyan came together, most likely under pressure from Colombo, and agreed to cooperate on implementing this new MOU on child soldiers. The challenge will be to ensure that the paramilitary's sub-commanders in the field fall into line. Karuna acknowledged this, stating at the signing "now we need to educate and inform our comrades."

19. (C) If the releases are undertaken, if UNICEF documents that no new recruitment is taking place, and if the public awareness campaign is launched, Embassy would be in a position to recommend that the Secretary of State certify that effective measures are being taken to demobilize child soldiers and prevent their future recruitment. We will press

the Government and the TMVP to fully honor the commitments
they made in the MOU. End Comment
Moore